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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9989  
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KINSHASA 000764

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/19/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EFIN](#) [KDEM](#) [KJUS](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: VITAL KAMERHE DISCUSSES KABILA, HIS RESIGNATION,  
KIMIA II, HIS POLITICAL FUTURE, AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Samuel V. Brock for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Vital Kamerhe, the former President of the National Assembly, recently provided Special Envoy Wolpe and polcouns a comprehensive review of the DRC's recent political history, offering his perspective on the DRC's political evolution. He views President Kabila as a changed man -- with a clear vision and open to ideas from multiple sources prior to the 2006 election, and then subsequently closing himself off from those committed to sustaining the democratization process. While supportive of a DRC-Rwandan political reconciliation, Kamerhe remained very critical of the current military operations against the FDLR, arguing that it has not achieved its security objectives and it has produced heavy civilian casualties. He argued for a more holistic strategy to deal with the FDLR and for the constitution of a special force, professionally trained and tasked exclusively with exerting pressure on the FDLR. Kamerhe has not yet decided on his own political future, indicating that he will make his decision after an upcoming meeting with Kabila. Meanwhile, he plans to assemble, informally, a number of leading Congolese thinkers and experts to explore the best ways of moving the DRC forward. End summary.

12. (C) Meeting with Special Envoy Wolpe and polcouns August 13, Kamerhe opened with a comprehensive review of the various phases of the Congolese peace process, beginning with the Lusaka Accord and carrying through to the Sun City Accord and the Pretoria Agreement. He indicated that he was the one responsible for Chapter 5 of the Lusaka Accord, establishing the basis for an Inter-Congolese Dialogue. President Laurent Kabila, he maintained, became very angry with him, claiming that Kamerhe had betrayed his country. Kamerhe, however, subsequently persuaded Joseph Kabila that he had to deal directly with Ugandan President Museveni and Rwandan President Kagame, and sign on to the Pretoria Agreement.

13. (C) According to Kamerhe, following Laurent Kabila's death, Joseph Kabila approached him for advice. Kamerhe said he gave Kabila a list of all the "mistakes" made by his father. Laurent Kabila may have been a great patriot, he told Kabila, but he had made the same mistakes as had Patrice Lumumba, i.e., "in diplomacy, you should not always say everything you believe," and you must leave room for compromise. Kamerhe said Kabila asked Kamerhe to write his inaugural speech, in which Kabila promised to bring back democracy through elections and promote good governance. He also committed to open negotiations on all sides -- with Masire (the DRC facilitator), Rwanda and Uganda.

14. (C) Afterwards, Kabila went on a world tour -- responding to Kamerhe's counsel that the DRC and the great powers needed each other. Then, an agreement was reached with Kagame, and

later with Museveni. By December 2002, the inter-Congolese dialogue was in place. Subsequently, the World Bank and IMF reinstated their programs.

15. (C) In Kamerhe's view, the problems began after Kabila's electoral victory. Previously, Kabila had presented and followed a clear vision, achieving his goals. But after the election, two camps formed that began to pull Kabila in very different directions. One camp (to which Kamerhe maintained he belonged) pressed to continue the democratization process; the second camp argued that they had won the election, and could therefore impose their own vision.

16. (C) Kamerhe was then elected President of the National Assembly, at a time when the DRC was facing a number of problems:

-- Confrontation between Bemba and Kabila troops. Kamerhe said that, following Bemba's defeat, he urged Kabila to send Bemba into exile, rather than to prison.

-- Disturbances in Bas Congo Province in early 2007 centered around the Bundu-dia-Congo religious movement. Kamerhe reportedly argued that security forces should not be deployed, but others in the government viewed this group as a separatist movement that needed to be suppressed.

-- Restarting dialogue with Rwanda, Uganda, and the CNDP. In the East, a plan was drawn up calling for dialogue with Rwanda and Uganda, and negotiations with Nkunda. The first step was to be the voluntary repatriation of the

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ex-FAR/Interahamwe. The second step would involve the creation of a neutral force to deal with recalcitrant groups.

It was clear, too, that the exploitation of minerals was fueling the conflict. Then, discussions between Rwanda and the DRC in Nairobi were held, followed by the Goma Conference in January 2008. In addition, the DRC and Rwandan Foreign Ministers began to meet more frequently.

17. (C) Given this progress, Kamerhe said he was very surprised to learn in January 2009 that joint DRC-Rwandan military operations had been launched against the FDLR. This was very sensitive, in Kamerhe's view, because the FDLR was dispersed throughout the population and without a strategy to protect the civilian population, the violence would only increase. Kamerhe voiced his disapproval publicly and Kabila became angry, according to Kamerhe, asking him to resign his leadership position in the National Assembly. Kamerhe rejected the initial demand for an immediate resignation, stating that he would only do so in front of the National Assembly.

18. (C) With Secretary Clinton's pending trip to the DRC, Kamerhe began to reflect on how the U.S. could assist in stabilizing the East. He sent a document to civil society members in the East who were going to meet with the Secretary in Goma. The memo began with a review of the errors that had been made by the international community, beginning with the failure of the international community to separate the genocidaires from the refugees in the camps that were established near the DRC-Rwandan border. A second error, in Kamerhe's view, was not to dig deeper into why former Rwandan President Habyarimana's airplane was shot down. Third, the international community erred in not condemning Rwanda's invasion of the DRC.

19. (C) Kamerhe argued that yet another error on the part of the international community occurred even earlier, during the waning days of the Mobutu regime, when Kengo was Prime Minister. Kengo had arranged a three-way meeting involving Rwanda, the DRC and the UNHCR. A proposal was made to remove Rwandan refugees, which the GoR believed to be a real threat to Kigali, deep into the interior of the DRC. But, according

to Kamerhe, the UN balked at this proposal because it reportedly did not have sufficient funds to support it.

¶10. (C) More recently, Rwanda supported the RCD-Goma for five years, then it supported the CNDP for over five years. Kamerhe opined that, when Nkunda's forces were at the gates of Goma in October 2008, this put pressure on Kabila to agree to ask Rwanda to conduct joint operations in the DRC. Kamerhe said he warned USG officials that a joint operation would not work (Note: Embassy Kinshasa does not recall hearing this from Kamerhe. End note). First, there was the ethnic dimension: there was a risk that the Tutsi-Hutu conflict would re-ignite in the East. The Bush Administration, according to Kamerhe, nevertheless believed a joint operation was the best solution. Kamerhe maintained that he asked Kabila to stress to then-A/S Frazer that it was important to have a very well-conceived plan.

¶11. (C) In Kamerhe's opinion, most observers now recognize that this military option did not succeed. It has only produced more gender-based violence, more pillaging, more deaths. What is needed now is a comprehensive strategy Qdeaths. What is needed now is a comprehensive strategy combining political, diplomatic, as well as military elements. On the Rwandan side, there must be greater openness for non-genocidaires Hutus to have political space. There is a need, too, to be more pro-active in facilitating repatriation of those who lay down their arms. In the economic sphere, there should be more transparency in the exploitation of minerals, such as occurred in Sierra Leone. Kamerhe pointed out that Rwanda has suddenly become a significant exporter of gold and coltan, and everyone knows these minerals come from the DRC. On the military side, an Ituri-type Artemis operation is required. The additional 3,000 troops mandated by the UNSC should not simply be appended to the current MONUC structure. Rather, a special, highly professional unit should be created from this group and be given the exclusive responsibility to mount a more forceful response to the FDLR. In addition, a court, consisting of judges from the international community, should be created, with the aim of adjudicating cases involving rape, pillaging, etc. On the diplomatic front, it was important to accelerate the opening of diplomatic relations between the DRC and Rwanda, and to facilitate dialogue between the two parliaments, and contacts at the civil

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society level. Strengthened collaboration between the two countries would facilitate bringing to justice those genocidaires who remain in the DRC.

¶12. (C) Kamerhe's longer-term vision envisions significant administrative and police reforms; then free movement of labor throughout the region; and the creation of a free trade area within the region. But the reforms must come first, if the economic objectives are to be realized.

¶13. (C) Asked why he believed Kabila was so insistent on removing him as National Assembly President, Kamerhe said that some of Kabila's advisors had told the president that Kamerhe was serious about running for president in 2011. Another factor may have been controversy over the Chinese contract: some believed that Kamerhe was exposing the weaknesses of the agreement for his own advantage, whereas Kamerhe saw himself as simply trying to get the best deal for the country. He believes that the charges against him were the fabrication of presidential advisor Katumba Mwanke, who was, in Kamerhe's view, likely receiving special commissions. Kamerhe had also argued that it was not fair to other donor countries that China should get such a deal, that it was better to find a balance so other countries could participate.

¶14. (C) Asked for his take on Kabila and the office of the presidency, Kamerhe said that Kabila had difficulty making decisions. In addition, there was an absence of effective

collaborators around him. According to Kamerhe, immediately after the election, Katumba began a process of replacing any presidential advisors who exerted any influence. He sought to control all business around the president, especially mining contracts. Kamerhe maintained that he urged Kabila not to get personally involved in so many mining deals, arguing that Kabila's wealth should be measured not in terms of money accumulated, but in terms of his success in eradicating poverty and developing the DRC. But Kabila and Katumba, according to Kamerhe, are focused on accumulating funds for the next election. In addition to Katumba, Kamerhe listed Kabila's wife, mother, and twin sister, as well as some of his brothers, as influential, informal advisors to the president. Kabila, Kamerhe said, is a shy man who likes to accumulate wealth quietly.

¶15. (C) Kamerhe said Prime Minister Muzito is a known embezzler. Hence the now public letter that Kabila sent to Muzito accusing him of economic mismanagement and withdrawing the PM's authority to sign-off independently on expenditures.

¶16. (C) Looking to the future, Kamerhe urged that the international community keep emphasizing the need for Congolese to honor the Constitution. The Prime Minister should answer to the National Assembly. Kabila, according to Kamerhe, should do what President Obama has done: integrate some opposition elements into the government to help the country. This could lead to a Government of National Unity. The country needs a leader with strong convictions to pull the country out of poverty.

¶17. (C) Asked what his political plans were, Kamerhe indicated that Kabila had asked to meet with him. In this meeting, Kamerhe said he would lay out his vision and advice.

If Kabila accepts what he has to offer, that would be good. If not, he will understand that there is no point in attempting to work with him. His decision about whether or not to pursue the presidency will be informed by the content of this meeting. Meanwhile, it is Kamerhe's intention to create an informal "think tank" of experts to explore how best to advance the DRC's future. He mentioned names such as Kamitatu and Ruberwa as examples of the individuals he wants to assemble. He hoped the next Prime Minister would remain in office until the next election. Otherwise, he warned, "it would be very serious."

¶18. (C) Comment: Kamerhe is probably one of the most politically sophisticated of the DRC's political class. He surprised many observers, given a somewhat unsavory background prior to the election and his emergence as National Assembly President, by the courage and competency he displayed leading the National Assembly -- resisting pressure from Kabila hard-liners, insisting that the National Assembly remain a fully open and inclusive body, and staunchly defending the institutional prerogatives of the legislative branch vis-a-vis an encroaching executive branch. He also has had the opportunity to work closely with the president

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over many years, and his observations about Kabila's style and inner circle are empirically based. With a very strong constituency in South Kivu, as well as within Kinshasa, his views on the East should be given serious weight -- particularly his caution about ill-advised military operations in the East. Finally, it is clear that Kabila sees Kamerhe as a real threat, particularly if he should form an alliance with other opposition elements such as the UDPS and the MLC. Kamerhe's upcoming meeting with Kabila could prove to be a decisive event in the DRC's political evolution. End comment.  
BROCK